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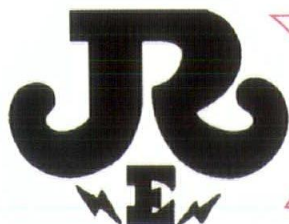


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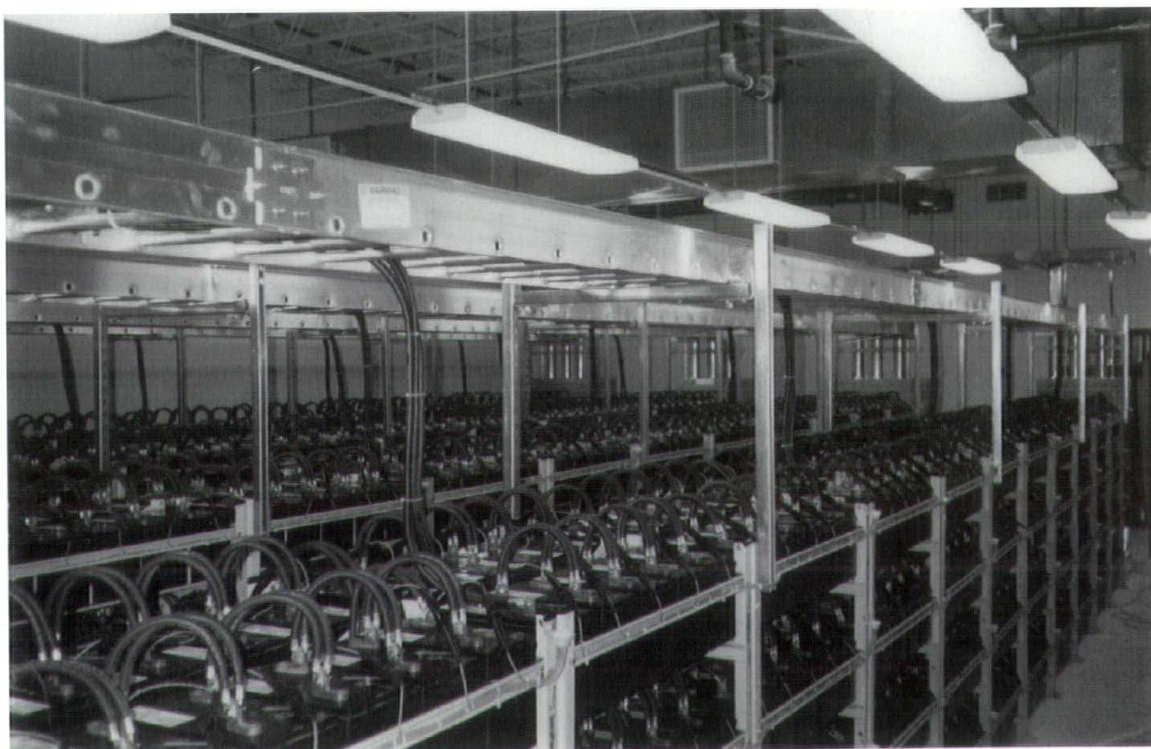


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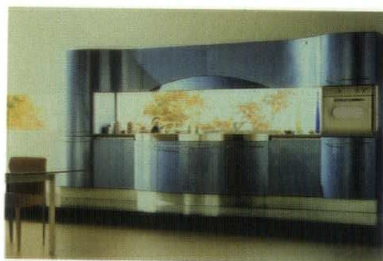
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True Confessions: Real Life in Award-Winning Architecture.
(page 14)



Old and new are combined in a downtown condo. (page 22)



Studio Snaidero DC offers elegant kitchen designs that are totally functional. (page 35)



On the cover: Guest cottage by Versaci Neumann & Partners.
(Photo by Walter Smalling.)

Architecture@Home

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WELCOME TO



Welcome to *AIA/DC Magazine's* first residential issue, "Architecture@Home." We want this to be a great resource for every Washingtonian who cares about where they live—from tenants to homeowners, people shopping for their first house to experienced developers, and all of our member architects.

Many local projects are featured here, showing the different ways that architects work with clients to make dreams come true. We hope that even our most seasoned AIA members will enjoy reading about peers' solutions, and see how the Chapter is working to promote all of our good work.

We're really going public for the first time with this issue. Some of you might have gotten this in your mailbox, while others will have picked it up at a local bookstore or newsstand. Tell us what you think and send us interesting projects to feature. If you'd like to be on our mailing list, send us your address. The next issue will be out just in time for Architecture Week 2001 (September 10th through 16th) with articles related to this week-long public celebration.

Architecture is about collaboration. Join us, whether you're an architect or a client, student or just interested, in our look at Architecture@Home in Washington.

—Stephen J. Vanze, AIA
President, Washington Chapter/AIA



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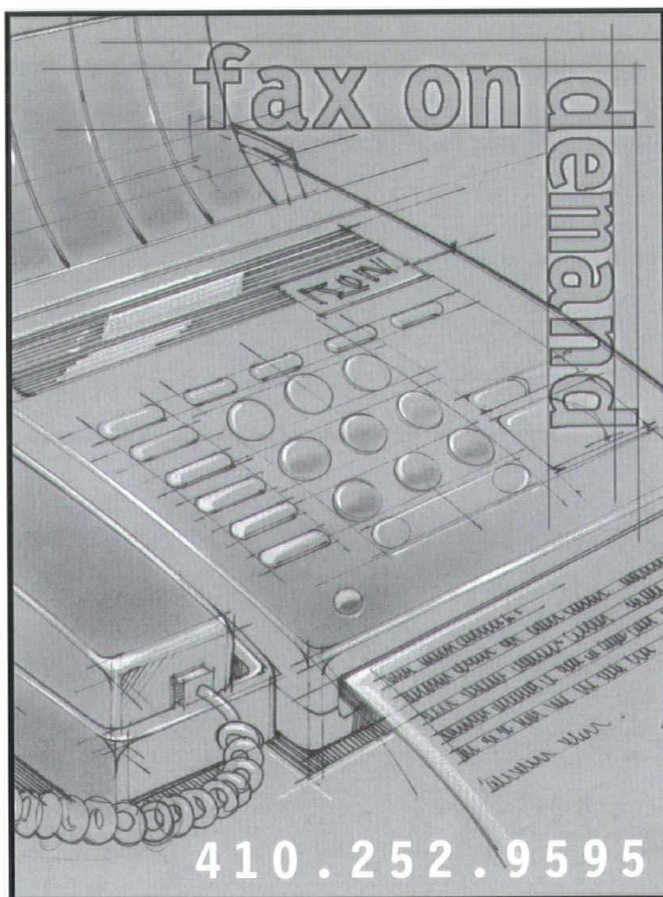
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THE GREAT DEBATE:

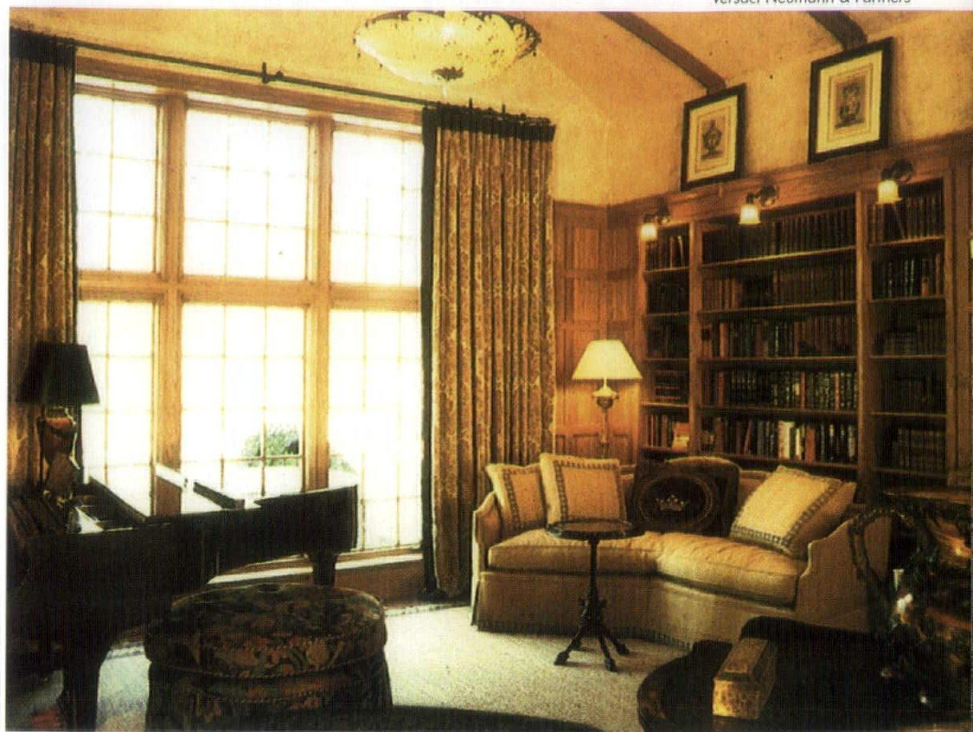
Two Architects Argue the Merits of the Living Room

This Spring marks the twentieth anniversary of the Chapter's Washingtonian Residential Design Awards, a competition co-sponsored by the *Washingtonian* magazine. Looking over the past two decades of winners, we noticed a subtle shift: people are thinking differently about the living room.

Once required of any custom home, the living room has been shrinking. Now it may be completely absent, replaced by a "great room" that combines living and family rooms and maybe even the dining room. Is the living room dying? It's hard to say: while some new homes exclude it, the majority still prominently feature a separate formal living space.

What do clients want, what do they need, and what makes sense? Here Russell Versaci, AIA, of Versaci Neumann & Partners, and Mark McInturff, FAIA, of McInturff Architects—two of the most frequent winners of our Washingtonian Residential Design Awards—debate the merits of the living room.

Versaci Neumann & Partners



▲ The traditional living room can be a piano room and a library as well as a place for formal entertaining. (Versaci Neuman & Partners)
▼ Hanson Sciannella Residence by McInturff Architects



Julia Heine, McInturff Architects

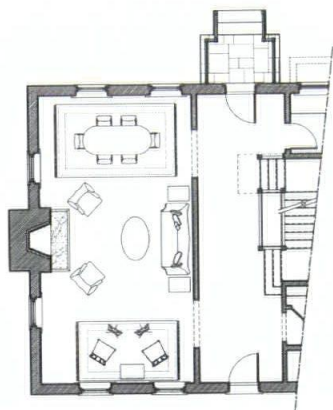
Focus

THE LIVING ROOM

The Best Room in the House

by Russell Versaci, AIA

► Plan of a double-parlor living room with a dining table, a seating area, and a pair of music recital chairs.



Versaci Neumann & Partners

Is there a dinosaur in the house? Sarah Susanka, AIA, architect and author of *The Not So Big House*, seems to think so. "The formal rooms for dining and living are dinosaurs—leftovers from the turn of the century. . . that sit empty most of the time," according to Susanka.

The place of formal rooms in the modern house is controversial, but the living room has been singularly vilified. A domestic space that some consider useless and obsolete, the worth of the living room is tangled up in the same critique that plagues the practice of traditional architecture. Why would anyone living in the modern age want to reproduce a room that is so decidedly old-fashioned, sentimental and regressive?

Well, the simple answer may be that people like it. The more sophisticated answer may be that it serves admirably as the physical and psychic centerpiece of the home. Just as the traditional house has an enduring appeal, so the living room has a firm hold on the popular imagination.

The historical origins of the living room can be traced to the medieval "hall-and-parlor" house plan. Conceived in sixteenth-century England and transported to the American colonies, the

▼ Today's traditional living room is a quiet preserve for family gatherings decorated with fine furniture, antiques, artwork and collectibles.



Ron Blunt

Among homeowners, the desire to sanctify one room of the house as a centerpiece, free from television and dog hair and the daily stuff of life, is still compelling.

plan consisted of two rooms of roughly equal size separated by an entry vestibule and a central chimney.

The hall was the home's main living space, a combination kitchen, dining room, workroom and bedroom—the original multi-purpose space. The parlor was also called the “best room.” It was filled with the finest furniture and possessions of the household, put on display to showcase the family's fortunes. The parlor was a special preserve set aside for visitors and for house calls from the clergy, otherwise untouched and rarely used. It held a semi-sacred status, and no self-respecting householder would have done without one.

The imperative to reflexively include a “best room” in every new traditional house plan is a holdover—some would say a relic—from the hall-and-parlor tradition. It remains true that we architects begin our house plan layouts by plotting the central position of the living room. Most of the other rooms in the house revolve around this pivotal decision.

Among homeowners, the desire to sanctify one room of the house as a centerpiece, free from television and dog hair and the daily stuff of life, is still compelling. Most instinctively favor the idea of having a living room no matter how predictable and under-utilized. As with most things traditional, people still want to have a special place reserved for their fine furniture, antiques, artwork and collectibles, even though it may only become a trophy room—or a dinosaur.

In fact, in traditional practice the living room has grown in stature as new purposes have been added to its repertoire. The walls have been lined with books and furnished as a library. Its natural quiet and seclusion from the rest of the house are tailor-made for music—the perfect place to practice the piano, violin or flute in a peaceful setting. Some of our clients have even extended the living room concept into a double-parlor with the addition of a formal dining table, so that the living room becomes the social focal point of the house. These imaginative uses have endowed the living room with creature comforts shared by no other room in the house.

One of the pleasures of a traditional house is the power of rooms. By this I mean the strength of distinct rooms that are enclosed by walls and have a singular character of their own.

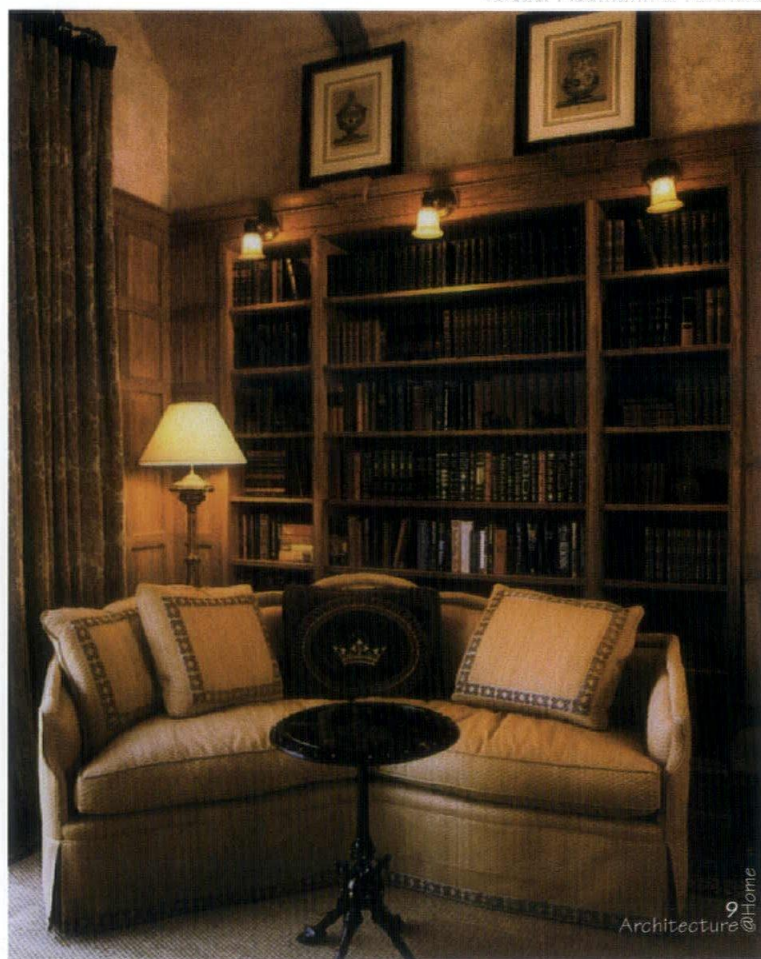
While the open plan beloved of modernists offers flexibility and a flowing confluence of space, it offers few places for private sanctuary, contemplation and intimacy. Space alone is not enough. A sense of place is a primal human need, and rooms provide enclosures with proportions of length, breadth and height that comfort the human body.

A house full of rooms provides the basic requirements for space but also creates places to nurture the psychic comforts of family living—to be together and to be apart. An open plan tries to turn space into place by manipulating ceiling heights and floor levels and “space dividers” to simulate rooms, but rarely succeeds in differentiating one space from more space.

Modern times don't necessarily require that the tried-and-true be thrown out for the next big thing. The iconography of tradition is still durable in American culture. The living room is a powerful icon that has enduring value as the centerpiece for a suite of rooms that make a house feel like home. ▀

Versaci Neumann & Partners

► Detail of library shelves and a settee for reading.







▲ Withers Residence



▲ Martin Shocket Residence

Focus — AN ETHIC OF ECONOMY

A Smaller Number of Better Rooms

by Mark McInturff, FAIA

◀ House at Merry-Go-Round Farms
▼ Knight Residence III



In our office, we have a very simple approach to understanding and editing our clients' "programs." Always, regardless of the ultimate size of the house, we prefer to emphasize quality over quantity. If there is a reason to have a more formal room for adult conversation or reading, and a less formal one for toys and TV, that's fine. But if the former is stiff and unoccupied while everyone crowds into the latter, then perhaps this family should build accordingly. The same idea applies to formal dining rooms.

Our practice makes all kinds of houses, large and small, with and without formal living or dining rooms. We listen to our clients, and they know how they live. Many have asked for one significant living space for all family living and dining, a space which is frequently called a "great room."

The term "great room" has historical pedigree, although it has been cheapened by the language of the real estate community. There is an interesting

double meaning in this term: does "great" mean quantity or quality? It should be about the latter, which may or may not imply the former.

There are other reasons aside from changing family dynamics to combine uses into one room or to edit out unused spaces. From an architectural point of view, there is virtue in the concentration of energy that goes into making a small number of significant rooms. It is, in fact, more difficult to make a large series of rooms that holds together as a memorable whole. Finally, it pays to concentrate budget resources on a smaller number of better rooms—quality over quantity.

Modernism has many legacies, but among the most important was a kind of ethic about economy of means, an ethic supported by new spatial strategies that encouraged multiple interrelations, both functional and formal, of a given space. The recent trend toward making houses of a smaller number of better spaces shows this ethic hitting home. ▀

All photos by Julia Heine, McInturff Architects
All projects by McInturff Architects

In 1997, the Washington Chapter/AIA's Executive Director Mary Fitch, AIA, and her husband undertook a brave project. They bought the neighborhood eyesore with the idea of turning it into their dream house. Architect Robert M. Gurney, AIA, designed a completely new, modern space that combines unexpected materials in a warm and elegant way. Since being completed in 1999, the project has won eight local, state, and national awards, including a 2000 Washingtonian Residential Design Award, a 2000 Chapter Award for Excellence in Architecture, and a 2000 National AIA Honor Award. Many people ask Fitch how it feels to live in a celebrated work of modern architecture. Here she tells all....



TRUE CONFESSIONS

**What It's Really Like to Live in
Award Winning Architecture**



David L. Hamilton Photography

The Kitchen—quiet for the photographer (at left) and full of architects who want to see the house (above).

Back in 1997 when my husband and I purchased a dilapidated house in Adams Morgan with no back wall, few people would have believed that this wreck would become a local architectural celebrity. Luckily my husband and I had a few things going in our favor: a very clear idea of what we wanted, absolute faith in the talent of our architect, and an unwavering vision that a striking, modern house could be built in Washington. Had we known how tough this would be to accomplish it might have given us pause, but once we began, we never looked back.

Within a few months of the project's completion, however, it became clear that our renovation project had produced something more noteworthy than we had originally dared to hope. We soon began to hear a question from friends and colleagues we didn't anticipate when we first started the project: "So what's it like to live in an award-winning house, anyway?" What follows are a few thoughts in response, after living in one for the past eighteen months.

by Mary Fitch, AICP
Executive Director,
Washington Chapter/AIA

Magic, 24/7

First and foremost, there is continued joy and amazement from living in this place. There are moments—at least once per day—when I still cannot believe what a wonderful place we live in. On sunny days, for example, there is a particular time in the afternoon when the light plays on the metal wall in our bedroom; it is so beautiful that it has literally brought tears to my eyes. Watching the snowfall outside through the window wall in our living room has been magical. And there are moments at all times of the day, throughout the house, where my husband and I suddenly stop, look around, and remark to each other about what an incredible place we have.

No construction project is effortless and ours certainly wasn't, but there is deep satisfaction at having completed the project successfully and within budget in spite of all the doubts and obstacles we encountered along the way. When we started this project, my husband and I were working off two federal salaries. We aren't dot-com millionaires, we didn't hit the lottery, and we didn't go to the First National Bank of Mom and Dad. We financed the project completely on the basis of our equity in our previous home, our savings, and a construction loan. While the total cost of the project was certainly substantial, on a per-square-foot basis it was about equal to the cost of building a standard suburban tract home in the Washington region.

There are other feelings as well, including a sense of being permanently on public display—a feeling that is reinforced by the glass window wall on the back of our home, which puts us on view to others, particularly homes across the alley. For the most part, though, we have become accustomed to this: after a couple of weeks, the neighbors across the alley lost interest in watching us as we watched TV, and they stopped staring.

In a related vein, when we have guests over at the house for dinner or parties, I occasionally wonder if some of them are coming to see *us* or the *house*. Early on, we had a number of professional gatherings so people could see the house. Lately it's been quiet dinner parties. I'm beginning to half-wonder if people's quick response to our invitations is really my sparkling conversation. Truth be told, though, if it is actually the house, I would understand, because three years ago I would have crawled over broken glass to have dinner in a place like this.

"In real life, of course, the living room table isn't as nicely arranged, there are papers on the kitchen countertop, and the bed isn't quite so carefully composed. But we can get the house to look something like what you see in the photos without too much trouble."

Paul Warchol Photography

There are also, of course, the requests for tours of the house—from architects, students, friends, and colleagues. We have given quite a few since we moved in, including several at midnight. It helps that my husband enjoys giving them and has become a bit evangelistic about modern residential architecture in general and the various details of our house in particular. He is very consistent in what he tells people as he takes them through the house, and I must now sequester myself when he does one because I've heard it so many times before. But we get a good feeling from knowing that the tours show off the talents of our architect. And we hope we might help inspire clients to think about modern residential design as an option for themselves.





Paul Warchol Photography

Is It Really That Clean?

Tours require us to clean the place up for visitors, and we sometimes don't appreciate having to do this, particularly for short-notice tours in the middle of the week. This, however, raises another question we are frequently asked: how difficult is the house to clean? The assumption behind the question seems to be that modern houses like ours are difficult to clean because they show dirt and dust more easily. The truth, however, is that this house is no more difficult to clean than our previous residence, and perhaps a bit easier. Since there are no carpets or rugs anywhere and few pieces of furniture to work around, the floor can be vacuumed or dust-mopped quickly, and the many built-in cabinets and drawers provide a lot of places to temporarily put things.

The published photos of the house were carefully arranged by the architect and the architectural photographer (Paul Warchol) to emphasize its design features. As a consequence, they tend to make the place look immaculate and somewhat spartan. In real life, of course, the living room table isn't as nicely arranged, there are papers on the kitchen countertop, and the bed isn't quite so carefully composed. But we can get the house to look something like what you see in the photos without too much trouble just by straightening up and doing some light cleaning. It helps that we are diligent about avoiding a build-up of junk mail and newspapers, but that's a good practice for any household.

Another feeling we experience is liberation. When we moved into the house, we sold off, gave away, or otherwise disposed of a lot of our possessions. We just don't have as much stuff as we did before. We don't miss it, and not having it around adds to the sense of lightness and simplicity that we get from living here. Sometimes we are asked where all our books are, because many of our friends have homes with bookshelves filled to capacity. We do have some books, but they, too, are in the built-in cabinets. We don't feel a great need to amass a large and permanent book collection, because we know that if we need a book on a particular topic, we're likely to find it in one of the city's many fine libraries or bookstores.

Whether or not you like our house—and I know modern isn't for everybody—the real true confession you should take away with you is that living in an architect-designed house is a truly wonderful experience. It lifts your spirits and makes the daily transactions of life, from pouring cereal in the morning to reading the newspaper in the evening, just a little more special. And despite what you may read, you don't need to be a millionaire to do it. Almost more than money, you need faith and the resolve to follow your vision to completion.

I suppose the final question about living in an award-winning house is whether we'd choose to do it again, knowing all that would befall us in design and construction and how we live in the house now. And that's the easiest question of all to answer: in a heartbeat. ▀

Project Profile



Ankie Barnes, AIA, designed the art studio to accommodate any need the artist might have.

Alan Karchmer, Assoc. AIA

CONTAINING A PASSION

Art Studio Evolves From Listening

by Hannah McCann

Lona Piatigorsky couldn't contain her interest in oil painting. "I had supplies all over the house," she admits, and the smell of oils tended to permeate the two-story white-brick colonial she shared with her husband, Joram Piatigorsky, Ph.D., in Bethesda, Maryland. The couple realized that if Mrs. Piatigorsky was going to pursue her passion, a single space must be designated as her studio. On the recommendation of a friend, they asked architect Ankie Barnes, AIA, of Barnes Vanze Associates Architects, to examine their options.

"We looked at the spare bedrooms, the garage...but there were drawbacks to every one, whether it was [a lack of] light or air," Mrs. Piatigorsky recalls. "Finally," adds Dr. Piatigorsky, "we realized that you can't make something new without taking something away." The couple asked Barnes to design a

separate addition to serve as Mrs. Piatigorsky's art studio.

"What inspired me is that [the Piatigorskys] clearly care about the subtle ways they use their house," Barnes remembers. From the beginning, he asked a lot of questions to gauge the couple's emotional and practical concerns. When the Piatigorskys are working, do they want to be near each other? How much disruption could they accommodate during construction?

Dr. Piatigorsky credits Barnes' empathy as one of things that made him the perfect architect for the project. "This was a cooperative project. He is an astute listener, and he understands [a client's] needs. He helped us figure out our priorities."

Barnes produced several sketches to address different issues. Could an old oak tree be preserved? (The answer,

eventually, was no: although the tree was saved, an arborist later determined that it was too frail to remain next to the studio.) Could the pool changing room be incorporated into the studio? (Yes, by providing indoor and outdoor access to the studio's bathroom.) How would the studio connect to the house but remain a separate, private space? (Through a vestibule off the family room.)

Mrs. Piatigorsky has a strong artistic eye, but when it came to the new studio, "I had no idea of what it would look like," she says. Barnes surprised his clients by suggesting a modern design that distinguishes the studio from the more traditional main house, while sharing the same white brick construction. "It fits in quite well," Mrs. Piatigorsky explains, "and is really very clever: the curving roof allows a wonderful reflection of light in the



Alan Karchmer, Assoc. AIA

▲ The art studio's curving roof allows a wonderful reflection of light within, and an unobstructed view of the garden from the main house.

studio." The low curve also allows an unobstructed view from the main house to the garden.

Barnes designed the studio to accommodate any need the artist might have. A ribbon of windows under the vaulted ceiling brings in natural light all year round; if that light isn't quite right, moveable ceiling fixtures are programmed to create warm or cool illumination. Rods high on the wall can hold hanging canvases or drapery. Paintings dry in a special closet with its own ventilation system. Air in the rest of the studio is refreshed every thirty minutes. Radiant heat under the concrete floor keeps the space temperate. Two large glass double doors not only add more light and view but also provide an easy way to move large pieces in and out of the studio.

Having worked in the completed studio for four years now, Mrs. Piatigorsky can say that it serves its

function very well: "The design of this studio is so integral to its real use—it's not pretending to be what it isn't." The space easily accommodates Mrs. Piatigorsky's expanding artistic interests, including a printing press she is adding for print-making. The studio is a place she loves to use. "It's a beautiful space. It's my space," she says.

It's also a flexible space. "We had a dinner here, and we had part of my son's wedding in here," Mrs. Piatigorsky recalls. Dr. Piatigorsky thinks of future possibilities: "If somebody wanted a small apartment, or a psychiatrist's office...there are many ways it could be used. These are things we considered with Ankie, because a house lasts longer than its owner."

Reflecting on their successful building experience, the Piatigorskys not only credit their architect's good eye but also his good ear. "Choose a person who can really listen and work with you and

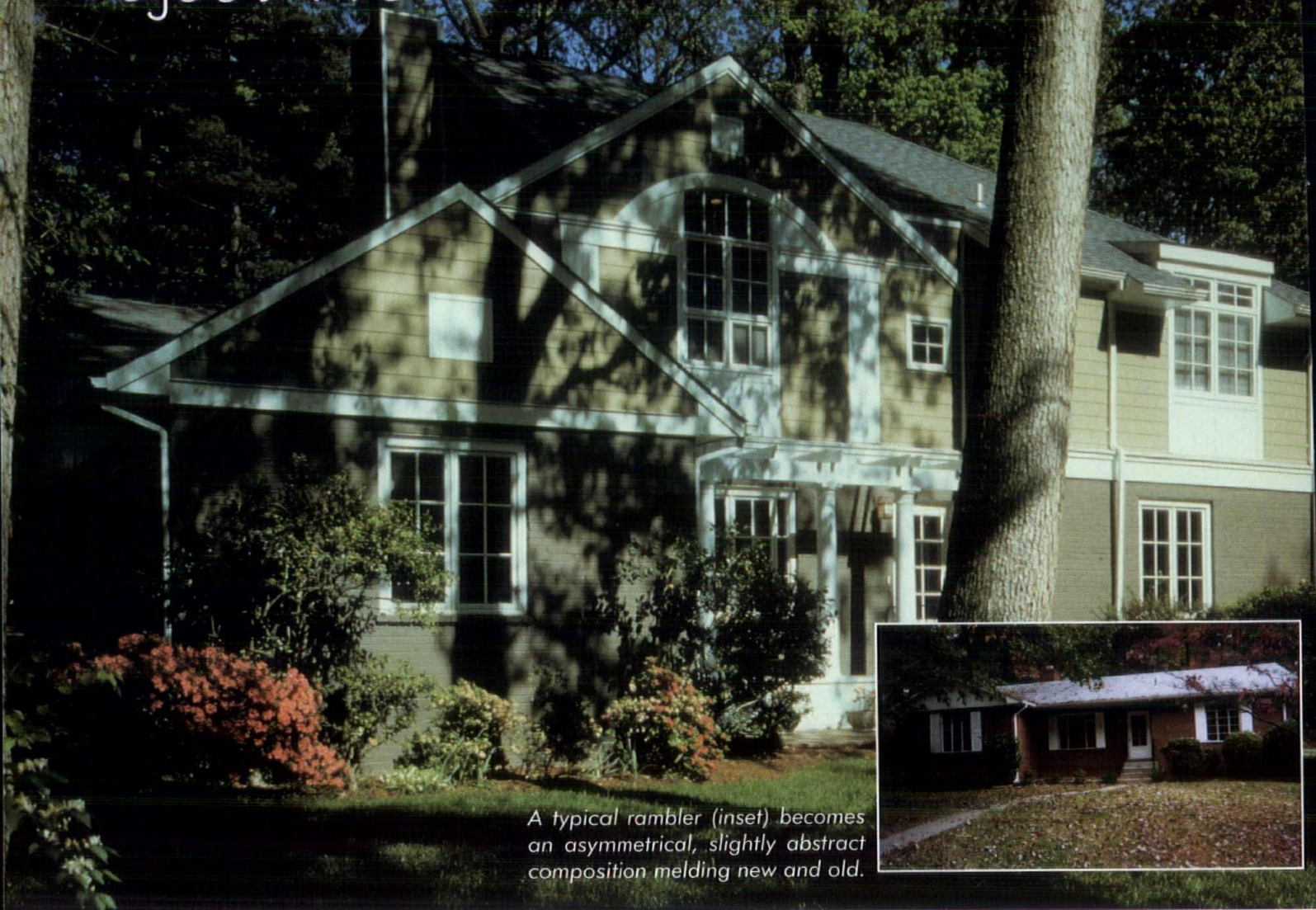
Dr. Piatigorsky (left) and Mrs. Piatigorsky (right) credit architect Ankie Barnes, AIA, (foreground) for his good listening skills and his eye for design. ▼



David L. Hamilton Photography

understand and accept ideas that come from you," Dr. Piatigorsky recommends. "You want somebody with imagination but also someone you can work with as an equal, because it is your house after all."

Project Profile



A typical rambler (inset) becomes an asymmetrical, slightly abstract composition melding new and old.

New house photo by Bill Reeves

THE BONE HUNTER

An Architect Goes House Hunting

by Norman Smith, AIA

Many Washingtonians have suffered the ups-and-downs of trying to find a "dream house" in our tight real estate market. Before settling for some big developer's idea of a dream house in a distant suburb, consider another option: shop for something in town that could become the perfect house. An architect can help you—not just with the design, but with hunting for the right candidate. Architect Norman Smith, AIA, describes one such project, where his job began in the early stages of house-hunting.

When George and Liz Connors first contacted me in 1998, they knew they wanted to live in a close-in Arlington neighborhood. They were sold on the area's good schools and short commute to D.C.; all they needed was the right house. They asked me and my wife, developer/builder Gail Montplaisir, to help them find a "set of bones" for what would become their ideal home, a place to raise their young children.

This was not the first time I had been asked to step into a renovation project before there was an actual house to renovate. I started by discussing general parameters with the Connors, figuring out what the perfect set of bones would be. It should be a solid house without major structural problems, with a flexible floor plan that would allow expansion. We would need a good lot in an area that would allow sizable additions. I stressed that the house should be relatively unimproved, so that the Connors wouldn't be paying for updates that they didn't need. (I've found that inevitably, if an expensive feature or finish is there, you find yourself designing around it. We wanted a shell that would welcome the Connors' idea of "improvement," not someone else's.) Over the next few months, we visited several houses and weighed design possibilities against budget constraints and construction feasibility.

Finally, the right house came on the market. It might not have looked like anything special, but it had everything we needed and nothing we didn't. It was a typical L-shaped, one-story rambler in an area of larger homes. Many of its neighbors had been substantially expanded, but this house had been untouched since it was originally built in the late '40s or early '50s. It was situated on a fairly level lot, with a stand of mature pines and oaks in the backyard. Inside, the rooms spread out in

either direction from a central foyer, parallel to the view; it would easily accommodate a second level. The orientation to the site, the trees, and the sun worked well. I thought it was the right choice, and the Connors agreed.

Now that I knew what we had to work with, we could begin the actual design process. I measured and photographed and reviewed the existing plans and elevations, and then I developed several design options.

The backyard's mature trees, sunlight and bucolic view were among the best features of the property, so I opened up the back of the house, letting the southwestern light pour through the trees into the living room, family room, kitchen and eating areas—the parts of the home which were to be used on a daily basis. Zoning restrictions mandated that the new second floor occupy only a portion of the existing home's footprint. To accommodate this constraint, I developed an asymmetrical composition of hipped roofs and shed dormers placed to one side of the existing house. The simple, almost arts-and-crafts style of the dormers, roofs, and details in concert with the original Rambler's heavy base creates a slightly abstract composition, melding new and old.

The location of the stair became a pivotal point in the design, as it does with many expansions. Aside from a stair's usefulness in getting people up and down, a stairway plays an important role in how a house feels. Often it's the only two-story space in a home, inviting procession and movement. Although we looked at simpler options, the Connors eventually settled on the most complicated option, which completely removed the existing stair and placed a new, U-shaped stair in the center of the house. This location makes moving from floor to floor an event; as you climb you catch a glimpse of the main rooms, which I arranged in a

Bill Reeves

The new house is open and inviting, a combination of "grown up" rooms and less formal family spaces. ▼





The central stair makes moving from floor to floor an event.

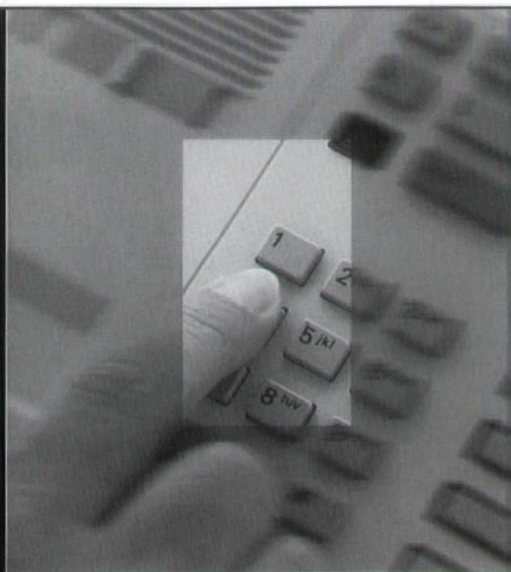
Bill Reeves

modified pin-wheel fashion around the stair. Each space benefits from the height and light of the stairwell while maintaining its own identity.

The project was finished in 1999. Since then, I occasionally visit the Connors to socialize and tinker with small details like the stair paneling. While parts of the house are indeed formal, the overall feeling is open and inviting, a blend of “grown up” rooms and more informal family spaces. This combination seems to work well for the family, and it allows for the possibility of future additions—a subject we often entertain over drinks.

Since the Connors first invited me to house-hunt, I’ve done the same for other clients, and I’m always glad to be in on the early stages. Too many homeowners risk buying something that won’t work as a renovation project. As an architect, I can help with the technical side: I know what zoning issues might be involved, and I can evaluate structural issues and say, “this is surmountable,” or “this is not.” I can also help with the non-technical part of the process. I know, when I walk into a place that has the right orientation with the sun and the site, that it will work. I start to design in my head while I’m standing there, to see the possibilities, and this gives my clients enough confidence to make the leap and buy something that may, at the beginning, look very different than what it will become. ▮

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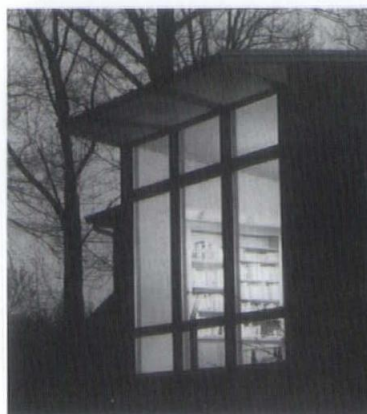
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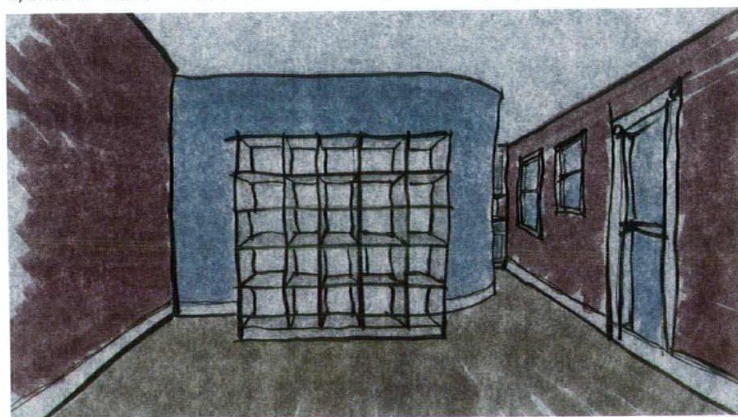
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Project Profile

When Dora Sossou first looked at a vacant unit on the Hawarden's top floor, she was moved by "the feeling of something belonging to another time."

▼ Walsh's rendering of the dining room shows the new curving wall and a system of custom-made boxes she designed to display Sossou's collectibles.



FITTING IN

Condo Renovation Combines Old, New, Borrowed and True

by Hannah McCann

The Hawarden at 14th and R Streets, NW, is an old building that feels very much alive. Dora Sossou sensed that when she first looked at a vacant condominium on the top floor. Yes, the apartment featured an open view of downtown Washington, two private balconies on front and back, and sunlight pouring in, but what touched Sossou was the sense of mystery. "This place really has a feeling when I look out these windows. It has the feeling of something belonging to another time."

Built in 1901, the elegant red-brick five-story apartment house is one of the oldest African-American-owned co-ops in Washington. When Sossou was told about the building's history, she could identify the voices she heard. "I could relate to the struggle of a group of people trying to build something in the name of dignity. You see the pride. It's very moving."

Against the advice of her broker, who warned her that co-ops were a risky investment, Sossou bought the unit and began to think about ways to preserve the history but incorporate a modern aesthetic she defined as "versatility, ease, and elegance." She had been collecting design ideas, adding pictures of sinks and hallways to a bulky scrapbook. Now it was time to find an architect.

When a wall came down, the seam it left revealed that adjoining walls were made of brick, not plaster and lath. "The brick is just wonderful," Sossou says. "It's alive; it has memories."



▲ Standing before one of the dining room's freshly-exposed brick walls, architect Meghan Walsh, AIA, reviews early pictures of the site.

▲ Owner Dora Sossou (left) and architect Walsh have weighed issues of cost, quality, modern design, and historic preservation as they've made decisions together.

David L. Hamilton Photography

The Right Architect

Sossou began her search at the Washington Chapter/AIA's Architect/Client Resource Center, a library of local architecture firms' portfolios. She looked through the pictures and liked the work of a few preservation firms as well the work of a few modernist architects. Some of the firms were well-known for grand new homes; others were up-and-comers. Although her budget was small (limited to about \$50 per square foot), Sossou refused to be intimidated by a big name. She contacted all the firms she liked.

"I interviewed a lot of people. Really they were all excellent," Sossou recalls. She evaluated the architects based on design, cost, and, most of all, communication. "I viewed this whole project as a learning process. I was looking for someone who would want to share and respond to a layman's questions. I wanted somebody who I could communicate with and who would be open to what I wanted to do."

Sossou eventually made her decision: she hired Meghan Walsh, AIA, a young sole practitioner who was just starting her own firm after several years of working for McInturff Architects, an award-winning residential firm in Bethesda. "When I talked with Meghan and I found out that she had traveled, that she had worked in South Africa, I felt like she was able to relate to a different type of habitat. She understood that good materials matter, but also that money matters."

Walsh was excited about the challenge. "I was taken by this place as soon as I came in....It's very dramatic. Dora wanted to preserve things—not in a stuffy, conservative way, but in an emotional way that I could relate to. With her interest in new things too, I thought this would be an interesting project to work on."

History In the Walls

Walsh was hired to alter the apartment—upgrade the kitchen, brighten the corridor, add closets, expand the bathroom—but also protect it. "This is Dora's intervention with this space, but we didn't want to lose everyone else's. She's fitting in with the spirits who were here before. It's really required a lot of thinking," Walsh explains.

From the start, a primary concern of Sossou's was how to preserve the plaster. The issue is a subtle one: most new walls are made from drywall rather than plaster and lath, since drywall is much easier (and thus less expensive) to install. But for people accustomed to living in older buildings, drywall doesn't have the rich and varied texture of plaster; it looks flimsy. "I guess I'm not used to it," says Sossou, who is from Togo, Africa, and has traveled extensively around the world. "I grew up in places that were solid brick and concrete." Walsh proposed a solution that would satisfy her client's taste as well as her budget: where new walls are necessary, they are made from drywall but skimcoated

with plaster to match the existing walls.

Walsh has not only sought to protect the walls, but the evidence of history within them. During construction, she and Sossou have found chips of old paint colors, a little piece of turn-of-the-century pink-flowered wallpaper, a newspaper from the 1960s.... "All of these things are in the trunk of my car," Walsh says. "We're thinking of doing a collage with all the collected pieces, but that's a secondary piece to this project. At this point we're trying to get through larger issues like plumbing and electricity."

The Learning Process

No matter how carefully Walsh and Sossou try to preserve the integrity of the space, some things will inevitably be lost as part of change. "What you do on site, that's sort of the incision," Walsh says. "You have to do it, and you have to do it boldly and confidently."

In this case, the first incision was especially painful. The wall between the dining room and kitchen, with a built-in cabinet that Sossou loved, was mistakenly torn down by the contractor. "It was in the first weeks of construction. I was away for the weekend," Walsh recalls. "Dora called me and said that the wall had been destroyed. I felt horrible. I knew how attached she was to it." Only the original paned-glass door to the cabinet was saved. (Walsh has been thinking of ways to reuse it; it may become the top of the living room coffee table.)

The loss became a lesson in how things are built. "After I looked at the remnants of the wall I realized that in actuality it was very thin," Sossou recalls. She had assumed that the wall was solid, plaster-covered brick. When she saw that it was simply plaster and lath over wood framing, it was easier to let it go.

With the wall gone, new design possibilities arose. The seams left on two remaining walls revealed that these were, in fact, brick underneath. Walsh and Sossou decided to strip the plaster and expose the brick, letting the dining room take on a more urban, contemporary feeling. To complement this change,

they picked out a hanging pendant light fixture from Illuminations, a high-design lighting store in downtown D.C. And Walsh designed a new wall to replace the old one, with a curving edge that lets the space flow into the kitchen.

The changes give the dining room a modern aesthetic, but also reveal a history that had been hidden. "The brick is just wonderful," Sossou says now. "It's alive; it has memories."

Economy of Expression

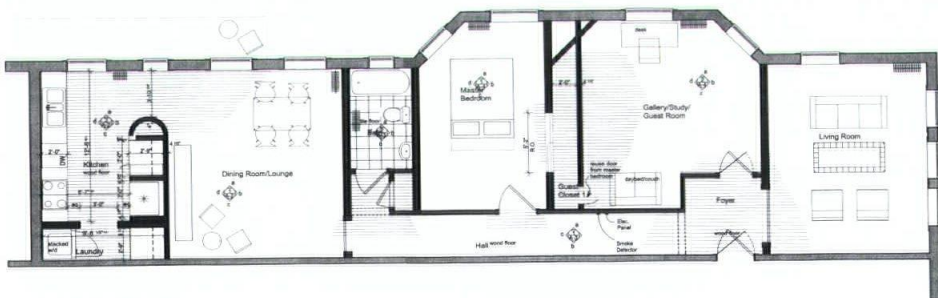
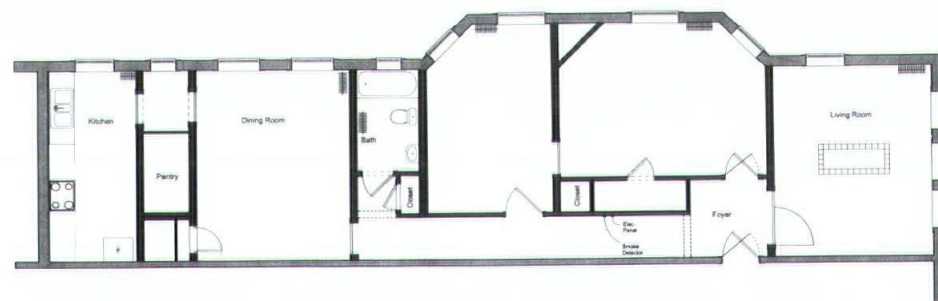
Throughout the project, Sossou has wrestled with her determination to stay within budget and her desire for the best. Both are natural instincts. "I came to this project with memories of my parents working with architects, of my mother at the last minute moving a wall, and my father being desperate and saying, 'well, how much is it going to cost?' I have those two images in mind."

When it came time to select slate tile for the bathroom floor, both the architect and the client knew that cost was an issue and quality was essential. What Walsh didn't expect was to find herself bare-foot with her client at the supply house, walking on different samples to see how they felt. "It's definitely not a whimsical process," Walsh says of working with Sossou.

"Dora is very sensitive. She likes to think about things for a long time, sort of gestate over them. And I think that's been really excellent for the project. I've learned quite a bit working with her," Walsh says.

Every little piece warrants discussion. Walsh and Sossou talk about where Sossou's new couch, a converted antique camel cart, will go, and which microwave will fit into the kitchen most discreetly. "We haven't started to talk about paint colors yet," Walsh says, "but that will be our next emotional decision."

All of it matters. "The intervention we've made in this space is really very minimal," Walsh explains. "But everything is very important. If you're writing a novel you have pages and pages to talk about ideas. But if you're writing a poem you have minute to express it. And that's really what this is." ▮



"The intervention we've made here is really very minimal," Walsh explains. "But everything is very important."

Floor plan shows before (above) and after.

BASEMENTS, THE LAST FRONTIER

How to Add a New Addition Without Disrupting Your Day-to-Day Life

by Hannah McCann



All photos courtesy of Landis Construction Corporation.

▲ Basements in older homes may have low ceilings and structural issues that need to be resolved. Renovation begins with underpinning the foundation and digging out the space.

Sometimes adding on is just not an option. If your house is in a tight urban neighborhood like Georgetown, Adams Morgan, or Alexandria, there's no room for an addition. Cost may be an issue: you'd like more space, but building a new wing is too expensive. Perhaps your garden is finally finished, and nobody is going to mess up those flowerbeds for any reason whatsoever. Or maybe you simply like to use what you have as efficiently as possible.

This is when a basement renovation makes sense. If your basement is just a dank repository for old exercise equipment and paint cans, consider adding a whole extra floor to your house by renovating the space you already own. It can be an economical alteration, easy on both the checkbook and your family's tolerance for an in-house construction project.

According to architect Chris Landis, AIA, many homeowners in the area are asking about basement renovations. "It's the cheapest space in town," he explains. Landis and his brother, builder Ethan

Landis, together run Landis Construction Corporation, a residential remodeling design/build firm. They spend a lot of time underneath Washington-area homes.

Why Do It?

One of the best reasons to renovate a basement that's just being used for storage is that you need storage! Everybody needs a little more room—not a dingy place to shove and forget things, but a clean, dry, well-lit and well-organized space to hold all of the papers and clothes and tools and toys and general extras of life. After all, if it's important enough to save, it's important enough to take care of.

Even if you have recently added on to your home, you may have discovered that storage space is at a premium. "Nobody realizes that as you increase your living area you also need to increase your storage space," Landis points out. So you put in that new kitchen, but now you need an extra freezer to keep all the leftovers. Or where do the computer boxes go after setting up the new home office?

Of course there are more exotic reasons to renovate a basement. It's an excellent place for a lap pool. It could be sound-proofed for teenagers to start a rock band. Perhaps it's the spot for that private home theater or billiards room you've always wanted.

Finally, a basement renovation will not only bring added space (and value) to your house, but might also spare future headaches. It's a chance to resolve the kinds of structural issues that plague old houses, problems like water and termite damage that are easy to ignore until it's too late.

How Is It Done?

A basement renovation can be a lot less disruptive to the homeowner than an addition because all of the work occurs underneath everyday living space, not on the other side of a gaping hole in the wall. Construction traffic is usually through an outside entrance, not the front door. "It doesn't affect the people upstairs," Landis says. At most, "maybe their water is turned off for one day."



▲ It's best if plumbing rests below floor-level, avoiding the need for an ejector pit.

Landis Construction Corporation does a lot of basement renovations. In older neighborhoods like Georgetown and Alexandria, the basements are often more like root cellars, with low ceilings and maybe even dirt floors. In these situations the renovation begins with digging out the basement and underpinning the foundation.

It sounds scary, like pulling the rug out from under a tower of blocks. The job involves serious issues of structural stability, and the permitting process is lengthy. "Down at the building department they're very picky about these kinds of jobs," Landis says (probably to the relief of anyone who lives in—or near—a house undergoing this procedure).

Many architects might be reluctant to undertake such a complicated job. Landis admits, "if you haven't done this before it's kind of unnerving, because it really does get into the issue of things falling down"—every architect's worst nightmare. Landis is more at ease. As part of a design/build team, he is familiar with these types of jobs and the problems that can arise during digging. "I certainly have been around the learning curve," he says.

The first step is to determine how the digging will be done. Ideally, the basement is situated in such a way that a Bobcat can come in through an outside opening. If not, the digging will be done the same way it was when the house was built: with shovels and wheelbarrows, and a few grunts and complaints, no doubt.

Usually Landis begins by digging a test hole to see what the home's existing footing looks like. "It's been sitting underground for a hundred years or so," Landis explains, "and nobody has a record of what it is. We look at how deep the footing is and what size it is, what it's made out of and what condition it's in."

Landis will also look at how the pipes come into and out of the house. "You have to see where the plumbing is so that when you lower the floor it will still work. Otherwise, if you go lower than the plumbing, you're going to have to get an ejector pit." Asked about how an ejector pit functions, Landis only says that it usually *malfunctions*. Sparing the details, he suggests that "it's something you want to avoid."

If there's an ongoing water problem in the basement this is the time to figure out why. "I'd say that seventy-five percent of the homes in D.C. have water problems in the basement," Landis guesses. "You try to just start with cleaning the gutters, cleaning the downspouts, getting water away from the house. Once you've eliminated the least expensive solutions then you go to the bigger ones." Bigger solutions might be tapering the ground outside away from the house, installing a French drain in the basement, or waterproofing the foundation walls.

Once these issues are resolved, then the underpinning can begin. It's a careful process. Holes are dug every three feet along the perimeter of the foundation wall, and the new footing is put in. After it's set, the process is repeated at the



▲ A cement pump carries cement from the truck to the basement.

other three-foot intervals.

When the entire foundation is in place, the project can move along at a quicker pace. Appliances are hung from the rafters so the basement floor can be dug out. Drainage is established, either by putting drain tile around the perimeter of the basement or installing a sump pump. Gravel is spread, wire mesh is laid, and the new slab is poured. If a cement truck can't back up to the basement, a cement pump carries the cement from the truck through a basement window.

Now the fun part: finishing the space as a spa or apartment or whatever it's going to become. Landis encourages clients to put in non-porous tile flooring rather than wood or carpet; even in a completely water-proofed basement, humidity tends to collect in the summer because it's a cooler space. If the boiler is low enough, radiators can be installed for heating, but many people prefer electric baseboards on a separate thermostat if the space isn't going to be used all the time. Since a lot of wires and ducts are hidden in the ceiling, it can be difficult to install recessed lighting; surface-mounted fixtures can be just as subtle. "If budget is an issue," Landis suggests, "you can stop here and finish the space later."

Landis says that, depending on the difficulty of digging and the quality of finishes, a basement renovation usually takes around three to four months to complete. Cost starts around \$80 per square foot—less than half the starting cost of a brand new addition. ▀

What is Design/Build?

Traditionally, a client hires an architect and a contractor separately. The architect designs the house or addition; the architect's drawings are sent to contractors for competing bids; the client selects one contractor; the contractor builds the project, and sometimes the architect is asked to supervise.

Design/build combines the steps and the players. A client hires one firm that staffs both architect and contractor. From the beginning of the design phase, construction cost is predetermined, eliminating the wait, surprise, and redesign that can come at bid time in a traditional architect/client/contractor relationship.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each arrangement depending on the project. For more information on choosing the right firm for your needs, contact the Washington Chapter/AIA's

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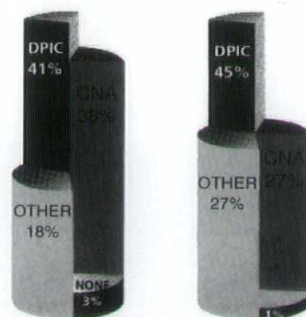
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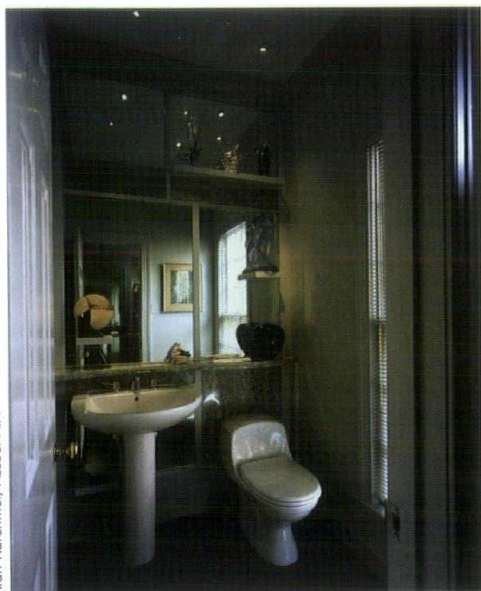
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Question: I am an avid art collector, but I've run out of room to display my finds. The only parts of my house that aren't show-spaces are the bathrooms. How can I make a bathroom into a decent place to display art?



Alan Karchmer, Assoc. AIA

▲ Mirrors, marble, and a Mondrian-inspired design transform a small bathroom into an elegant artspace.

Architect's Answer
D.C.W.C.
Treacy & Eagleburger Architects

Architects Treacy and Eagleburger prove that a bathroom can become an elegant and dignified artspace in their transformation of a rowhouse water closet, a project the architects affectionately dubbed "D.C.W.C."

The D.C.W.C.'s owners are collectors of contemporary handcrafts who reached the moment every collector dreads: they had too much stuff for their space. The downstairs powder room and a small vestibule that led to it were the last frontier. Could the architects unite the two small rooms in a way that would show off the art but still serve the rooms' basic function?

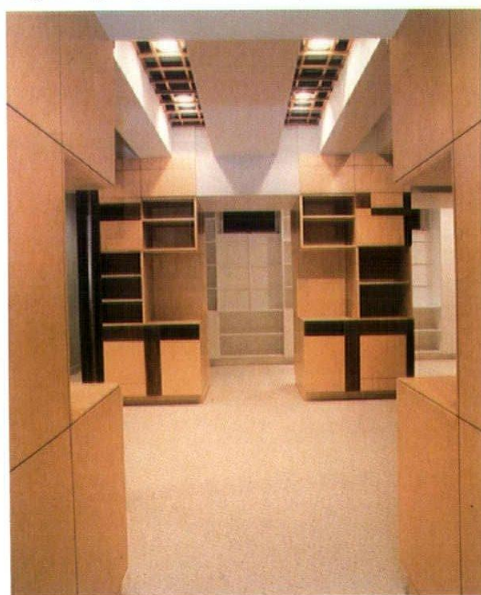
Treacy and Eagleburger embraced the challenge. Using mirrors, marble, and a Mondrian-inspired aesthetic, they created "quilts" of wall-panels that face and reflect each other, making the separation between the two small rooms seem almost invisible. The quilts' "seams" protrude as three-dimensional shelves to display the art.

Any good gallery has excellent lighting, and this tiny artspace is no exception. Lighting Designer Cheryl Flota of Light'n Up used fiber-optic precision lamps to individually illuminate each object. Twinkling with constellations of tiny lights, the ceiling resembles a clear night sky. The finished water closet now feels more like a magic closet full of treasures.

—H.M.C.

Question: Can you suggest an attractive way to store children's toys, something that we will actually use?

▼ Deep cabinets that look like decorative boxes might help a playroom—or any room—stay tidy.



Woody Cady Photography

Architect's Answer
Basement Playroom
Norman Smith Architecture

Finding a storage solution that anyone—adult or child—will readily use is a challenge. Making it look good is another. When Norman Smith, AIA, was asked to design a cabinet system as part of a basement playroom, those challenges seemed to be confounded by the space's low ceilings and hanging ductwork.

Rather than fight such constraints, Smith let them guide his design. He created a grid of beams to enclose the ducts, placing cabinets at the junctures. The cabinets serve as free-standing columns that loosely define the boundaries of a play-space. To hide the ceiling's ductwork, the cabinets needed to be large and deep, a sizing

that perfectly accommodates children's toys at ground-level.

The cabinets look like decorative boxes. Avoiding a childish scheme that could be outgrown like dolls or games, Smith designed a bright, modern pattern for the surface. Squares and rectangles of grooved and color-stained birch veneer help disguise the boxes' mass, making them more appealing to a child's sense of scale. (Smith hopes, but cannot promise, that children will be enticed to put their toys away!)

—H.M.C.

Question: My apartment has a long, dark hallway. It's a depressing space that I have to pass through every day. How can I brighten it up without knocking down the walls?

Architects' Answer
A Kalorama Corridor
Reena Racki Associates

Many Washington apartment houses line up the rooms like railcars, linking them with a long corridor that can feel as bright and fresh as a railroad tunnel. You can't knock down the walls (even if you wanted to) because they probably support the apartments above. But the right combination of small changes can dramatically alter how the hallway feels, as Reena Racki Associates demonstrates in their renovation of a Kalorama apartment.

"When I design from scratch I try not to have corridors," Reena Racki, AIA, says. "But if you have to work with them, then think of ways to minimize the compression." The first way is by adding light. Racki puts transoms over the doors that line the hall to borrow light from window-lit rooms. It's a classic apartment-house convention that still makes sense; the hall now has enough natural light to illuminate it throughout the day. For night, Racki hangs blown-glass lamps that softly carry light down the hall.

Many people hang pictures in a hall to distract from the monotonous expanse of plaster, but a passageway's narrow confines don't really allow for art appreciation. With the same goal in mind, Racki creates an architectural kind of artwork to punctuate the space: vertical pilasters. Framing the doorways, the pilasters bring rhythm to the corridor, emphasizing the space's verticality rather than its length. The tall, elegant columns are economically crafted by slicing pre-made columns in half.

Another inexpensive but dramatic change is achieved by slightly curving the hall's ceiling. The construction process behind this change is fairly simple: thin drywall is bent and attached to a wood frame on the flat ceiling. The result is a relief to the eye: a boxy hallway is softened, its slope echoing the gentle forms of the amber pendant lights below.

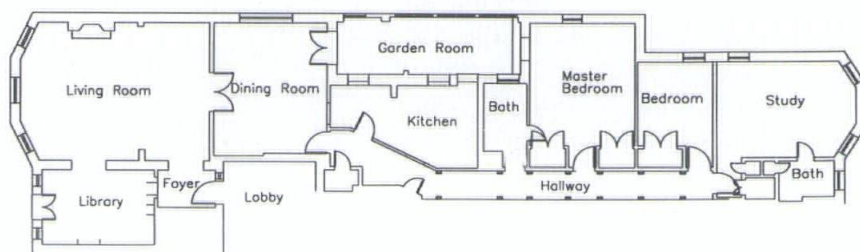
Finally, the choice of flooring helps set a fresh tone for this corridor. Racki had two different carpets cut and sewn together to alternate vertical and horizontal patterns. When the sections are aligned with the pilasters, the result is a rhythmic space and a scenic view.

—H.M.C.C.

Reena Racki Associates adds light and pilasters to transform a tunnel-like corridor (inset).



Hoachlander Davis Photography



▲ The hall links rooms you use every day.



▲ A Media Room lets viewers get the most out of their entertainment system.

Above photos by Michael Dersen

Question: Help! I feel like my family lives in front of the TV. We spend most of our time in the combined kitchen/dining/family/computer/playroom on the back of our house. Of course the TV is there too. You can't eat, cook, e-mail, read, or relax without hearing it. Even when it's off, I hate how the giant screen stares blankly at us. Our kids would never let us get rid of the TV, but how can we hide it?



Architect's Answer
Media Room
Brennan & Company Architects

A lot of households struggle with the "TV problem." Ever since the TV fell out of fashion as the showpiece of American living rooms, architects and furniture designers have been producing cabinetry to hide it when it's off. But the more people who live in your house, the more likely it is that someone wants the TV on almost all the time. That cabinet door will never close. Short of giving the television away, how can you get away from it?

Brennan + Company provide a surprising solution: give the TV its own room. Not the dingy basement "TV Room" of years past, but a Media Room

for the twenty-first century that lets viewers get the most out of their entertainment system. Combining the best in audio-visual technology and comfort, Brennan + Company's Media Room brings new dignity to a family's enjoyment of TV, movies, and music.

In a sound-proofed addition over the garage, the Media Room has a clear sense of purpose. A theater-like vaulted ceiling spans the room, where a semi-circle of over-stuffed chairs faces an elegant cherry cabinet. All of the wires and components that create a state-of-the-art audio-visual experience are hidden from the eye.

With the touch of a button, black-out shades cover the windows. Just like a movie theater, wall sconces and cove

lighting provide soft illumination that can be dimmed or brightened. Inside the built-in cabinet, the family keeps their movie and music collections with the equipment to play them. Each component is on a rack that slides out for convenient access to wires and plugs. The video screen hides in the cabinet's cornice. It descends with another click of the remote control. Push one more button, and speakers bring surround-sound to the family's private theater.

You would have to wait in line and pay the price of a premium movie ticket to experience better theater. Now Brennan + Company's clients are truly entertained by their TV and enjoy the rest of their house without commercials. ▶

—H.M.C.

Seeking Questions for Future Issues of AIA/DC Magazine

Is your home architecturally-challenged? Ask an architect for a solution! Write to Answers@Home, c/o the Washington Chapter/AIA, 1777 Church Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20036. Or e-mail Hannah McCann, Editor, at hmccann@aiaadc.com.

HOW TO WORK WITH AN ARCHITECT

Answers to Frequently-Asked Questions

by Stephen J. Vanze, AIA

The Chapter offers a popular workshop on "How to Work with an Architect" twice a year. It's a chance for the curious homeowner to look at drawings and models and ask a live architect lots of questions. For those of you who can't make it, workshop leader Stephen J. Vanze, AIA, summarizes some important points below. Vanze is a partner in Barnes Vanze Associates Architects, an eighteen-member firm specializing in residential architecture. He is also the 2001 President of the Washington Chapter/AIA.

How would you recommend finding an architect?

There are a lot of resources to help you find an architect. One of the easiest ways is to talk to friends or neighbors that have done projects you like. Another is the Chapter's free Architect/Client Resource Center. The Resource Center has more than seventy portfolios for local architects, and the collection grows nearly every day. Located in the Chapter House at Dupont Circle, the Resource Center allows you to look at a lot of work and consult our well-trained staff as you begin or refine your search.

There are also resources on the Web you can take advantage of, such as the Chapter's website (www.aiadc.com), which includes links to many local area firms, Improvenet.com, and the national AIA's consumer website at www.aia.org. You should also take some time to look through shelter magazines such as *House Beautiful*, *Southern Living* or *Metropolitan Home*. You might find an architect whose work you like, but more than that you can start collecting images so that when you meet with an architect they can see what you want.

So after you've done all your homework—looked at portfolios, collected pictures and talked to your friends and neighbors—then what?

Even more homework! Its very important that you select an architect that is right for you. Remember: this person is going to take your vision and bring it to life. You need to have a lot of faith and confidence in your architect.

Your search should have led you to one or more architects. The Chapter always recommends interviewing three. Look at their previous work and ask a lot

of questions (see page 32 for some questions to get you started). Make sure the architect shares your vision and interest: don't, for example, hire an architect who specializes in classic, traditional work if you are looking for glass and stainless steel, or vice-versa.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of having trust in your architect. You should feel really comfortable talking with them. You should imagine having breakfast, lunch, and dinner with this person. I'm fortunate that many of my former clients are now my friends. But you don't need to be best friends with your architect—just make sure you have a great deal of faith in their ability and integrity.

So call all of their references and make sure you ask the tough question: "If you had it to do over, what would you do differently?" About 110% of the time the architects are going to give you their happiest clients to talk to. But that tough question may reveal things about the working arrangement between the client and the architect and whether it meshes with your work style.

What about the fees? Aren't there many different fee structures?

Yes, there are many different fee structures, but they can be summarized in three ways: a fee that is the percentage of the construction cost, an hourly fee, or a fixed fee. You should be very honest with your architect about the budget for your project; together you can work out a fee arrangement that is mutually agreeable. Sometimes percent-of-construction-cost favors the client; other times an hourly rate is better. Having a frank discussion about money will also tell you if you and your architect can communicate well.

O.k., so now I've hired the perfect architect. What steps in the process should I expect?

Every architect will approach the project somewhat differently, so I can only tell you how we do things at my firm, but that should give you a general idea of how the process works. First we go through the PROGRAMMING PHASE. That's where we sit with you and talk to you about what you really want. We may do some general sketches to make sure we are going in the right direction. With a concept in place, we'll move to the DESIGN PHASE where we will work on the design of your project. This phase usually takes about three to four weeks. Once we have worked out a design that you like and before we start working on final drawings, we will send it to a contractor for PRICING. This is not the final bid, but it is a good reality check to make sure the design meets your budget criteria.

Once we know that the project is within budget, we will work on the CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS. This phase represents about forty percent of an architect's fee. Construction drawings include everything from what kind of structural members are needed to the model number of the drawer handles in your kitchen. This is the set the contractor will build from, and it must be very accurate. Once we complete the construction drawings, we will send them out for BID, usually to three contractors from whom you will get a range of pricing—hopefully within range of the initial pricing we did before construction documents.

Once you accept one of the bids, the last phase begins: CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION. Some clients might

be tempted to skip this phase, thinking that if all of the construction documents are in order, what could go wrong? A lot! The architect is your eyes and ears on the construction site: he or she will know if the limestone being put in your foyer is the one you liked or a cheap imitation. During construction your architect can

spot a small problem and fix it easily. Left unchecked, a small problem or error that happens early can mushroom into a major disaster as the project progresses. Construction Administration represents roughly twenty percent of the architect's fee, and it's critically important to the success of a project.

Sounds like a long process!

It can be—but it is also a very rewarding one. At the end of it all you have the house or addition exactly as you wanted it. That's why you hire an architect: to build your vision. ▀

14 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

1. Think about your current home.
What do you like about it?
What's missing?
What don't you like?
2. How do you use your home?
Are you there a lot?
Do you work at home?
Do you entertain often?
Do you have any specialized hobbies?
How much time do you spend in the living areas, bedrooms, kitchen, office, etc.?
Do you use your yard?
3. Why do you want a change?
Do you need more room?
Are children grown and moving on?
Do you have new interests or needs?
What do you want that you don't have now?
4. How will you use your new or improved home?
- What functions and activities need space (e.g. cooking, sleeping, studying, playing)?
How much space will you need for each function?
5. Are there specific features, fixtures, or products that you want to include?
6. What do you think the addition/renovation/new home should look like?
What should it look like inside?
What should it look like outside?
7. What are your preferred design styles? Do you have pictures of what you like?
8. How much disruption can you tolerate during the design and construction process?
9. How much time do you have to be involved in the process?
10. Do you plan to do any of the construction work yourself?
11. Who will be the primary contact with the architect, contractor, and others involved in designing and building your project? (It is good to have one point of contact to prevent confusion and mixed messages.)
12. How soon would you like to be settled into the new place? Are there rigid time constraints?
13. How much can you realistically afford to spend on this project? (No, this is *not* the bottom line.)
14. What qualities are you looking for in an architect? (*This is!*)

Once you have answered these questions, you will be prepared to talk with an architect. The more detailed information you give, the easier it will be for the architect to address your needs.

14 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ARCHITECT

1. What are important issues or challenges in this project?
2. How will the architect determine what you need?
3. What is the architect's design philosophy?
4. How busy is the architect?
5. How does the architect organize the design process?
6. What will the architect show you along the way to explain the project? Will you see models, drawings, or sketches?
7. Who from the architecture firm will you be dealing with directly? Is that the same person who will be designing the project? Who will be designing your project?
8. How does the architect establish fees?
9. What would the architect expect the fee to be for this project?
10. What is the architect's experience/track record with cost estimating?
11. If the scope of the project changes later, will there be additional fees? How will these fees be justified?
12. What services does the architect provide during construction?
13. How disruptive will construction be? How long does the architect expect it to take to complete your project?
14. Does the architect have a list of past clients that the firm has worked with?

What to Expect

Toolbox

The Steps Involved in Design and Construction

Design and construction projects involve several steps. Typically, projects go through the following six phases, but on some projects these steps may be combined or there may be additional ones.

Deciding What to Build

The first stage is programming: the homeowner and architect discuss the requirements for the project (how many rooms, the function of the spaces, etc.), testing the fit between the owner's needs, wants, and budget.

Rough Sketches

The architect prepares a series of rough sketches, known as schematic designs, which show the general arrangement of rooms and of the site. Some architects also prepare models to help visualize the project. The homeowner approves these sketches before proceeding to the next phase.

Refining the Design

The architect prepares more detailed drawings to illustrate other aspects of the proposed design. Floor plans show all the rooms in correct size and shape. Outline specifications are prepared, listing the major materials and room finishes.

Preparation of Construction Documents

Once the homeowner has approved the design, the architect prepares detailed drawings and specifications, which the contractor will use to establish actual construction cost and build the project. These drawings and specifications become part of the building contract.

Hiring the Contractor

The homeowner selects and hires the contractor. The architect may be willing to make some recommendations. In many cases, homeowners choose from among several contractors they've asked to submit bids on the job. The architect can help you prepare bidding documents as well as invitations to bid and instructions to bidders.

Construction Administration

While the contractor will physically build the home or addition, the architect can assist the homeowner in making sure that the project is built according to the plans and specifications. The architect can make site visits to observe construction, review and approve the contractor's applications for payment, and generally keep the homeowner informed of the project's progress. The contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules, and procedures.

These guidelines are based on those prepared by the American Institute of Architects, copyright 1992. For more information on working with an architect, contact the Washington Chapter/AIA's Architect/Client Resource Center at 202.667.1798, or visit www.aiaadc.com.

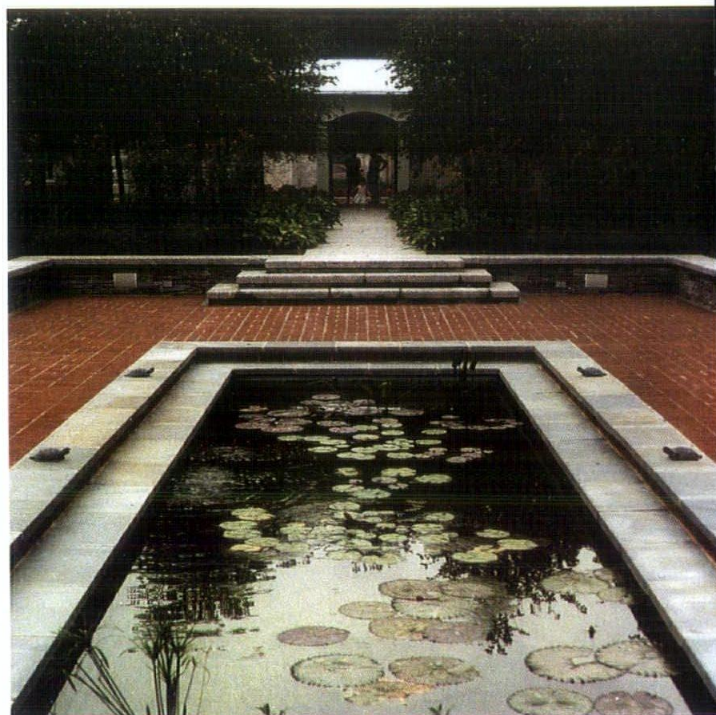
TEAM MEMBERS

You've met architects and clients; now, meet some other members of the team bringing dream homes to life. The Fitch Studio is a landscape architecture firm (and an AIA/DC Affiliate) that will design an outdoor environment to complement your house and the way you use it. Studio Snaidero DC (also an AIA/DC Affiliate) showcases high-end kitchen cabinetry that marries good looks with total functionality. Both Affiliates can work with you and your architect to make every aspect of your new home just right.

The Fitch Studio

A new building can be close to completion, but it's not finished until the space around it makes sense. That's when The Fitch Studio steps in to determine how the building and the site will relate to each other. This small landscape architecture firm (they have a staff of three) provides personalized, high-quality landscape design to a broad range of clients, from homeowners to corporations to government agencies.

The Fitch Studio forms a close relationship with all of their clients and with the architect as well (if one is involved), so that critical issues are addressed. Often these issues are not just about how the landscape will *look* but how it will *work*. How much maintenance will be required? Where will people walk and where will they park? How will slopes be dealt with and how will the ground drain?



On residential projects, The Fitch Studio designs the site to complement both the house and the way its owners live in it, extending indoor life into the gardens. A rear garden may add privacy to a sunroom; a front drive may be designed in such a way that visitors feel welcomed. Sometimes the landscape will be designed to resolve a structural issue, such as a basement that floods during heavy rains. With each project, The Fitch Studio carefully prepares construction drawings and visits the site during construction so that the work will be priced fairly and built properly. For more information on The Fitch Studio, call 202.338.7174. ▀ (Note: the Fitch Studio is not related to Mary Fitch, Executive Director.)



Giaconda by Massimo Iosa Ghini

Studio Snaidero DC

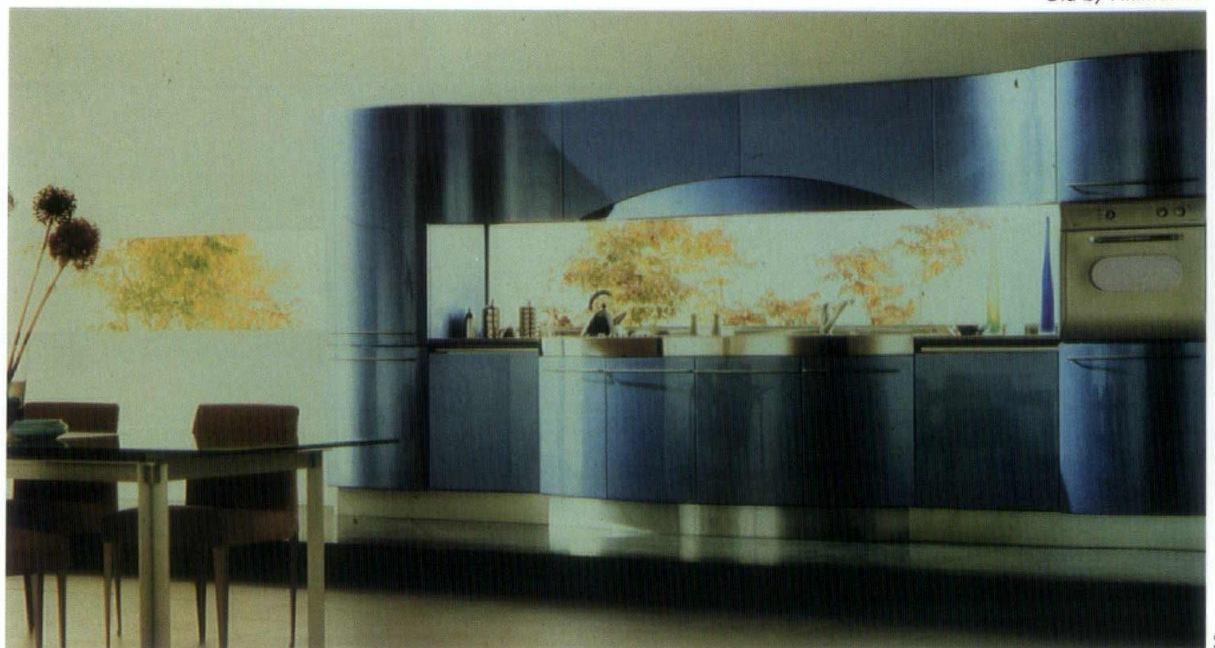
If you take your kitchen seriously, then cabinetry is important to you. It's the face of your favorite domain. It stores treasured cookware and ingredients, and it lets you cook with ease. For the best in cabinet design, visit Studio Snaidero DC. Located in the Washington Design Center at 300 D Street, SW, Studio Snaidero DC showcases high-end kitchen cabinetry by the Italian manufacturer Snaidero.

Snaidero kitchens are recognized world-wide by premier architects and distinguishing clients for their simple, elegant designs and total functionality. The look is modern, based on the design philosophies of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies Van der Rohe, and Richard Neutra. An emphasis on

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Studio Snaidero DC displays complete Snaidero systems, allowing clients to touch finishes, open drawers, and reach into cabinets. A staff of architects and designers works with each client to determine which system will make the perfect kitchen. For more information on Studio Snaidero DC, call 202.484.8066.

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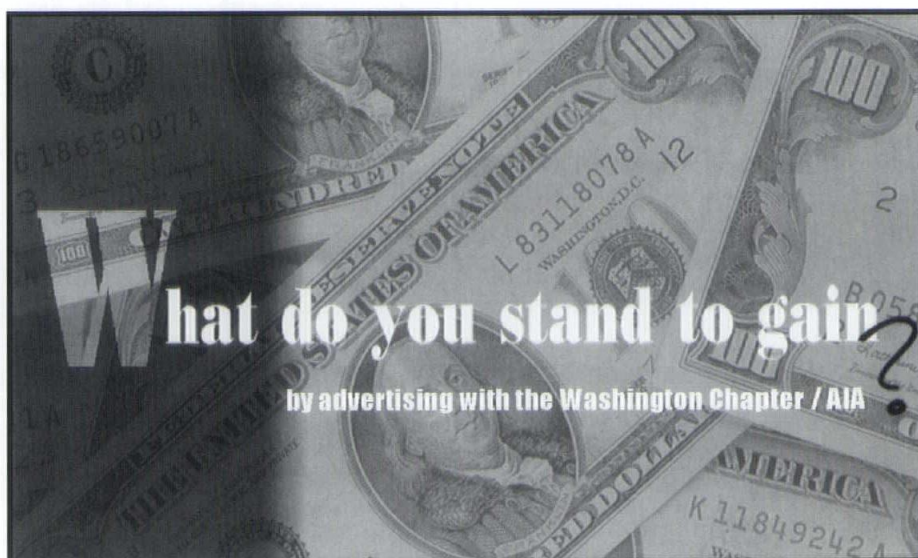
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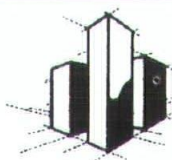
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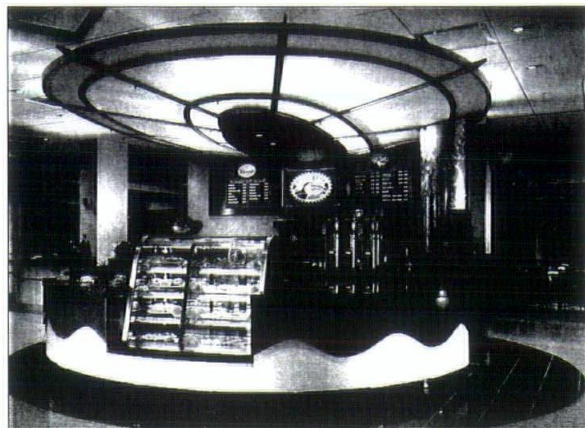
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